

April 21, 2022

Dr. James D. Fielder, Jr.
Secretary of Higher Education
Maryland Higher Education Commission
6 North Liberty Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Secretary Fielder,

Consistent with Education Article 11-206.1 of the Annotated Code of Maryland and Code of Maryland Regulations 13B.02.03.27, Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) opposes in the strongest terms possible, the establishment of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) by Frostburg State University. The grounds for this objection are well-founded and meet the threshold of creating "unreasonable program duplication which would cause harm to another institution."

In Frostburg State University's application, two general sentences concerning Allegany College of Maryland do not adequately capture the <u>numerous</u> adverse consequences that will result should this program be approved. Frostburg State University and Allegany College of Maryland reside in the same county: a mere 12 miles separate the two institutions. Allegany County has seen decreased population over the last 40 years. A new program competing for students in an already decreasing demographic will inevitably lead to a reduction in the applicant pool number and applicant quality for each program.

ACM has a *well-established* and *well-recognized* nursing program, enjoying its 52nd year. Over this time, the Nursing program has a well-documented history of success preparing students to become employed Registered Nurses. Over the last three years our NCLEX pass rate has averaged 90.72 percent. We have a cohort at our Garrett educational site, a cohort at the Bedford County Technical Center close to our Bedford County Campus, an evening and day cohorts at our Cumberland Campus, and our online program.

For the past two years, the Online Nursing Program at Allegany College of Maryland has been the top ranked online LPN to RN program in the nation according to RegisteredNursing.org. ACM was selected based on student performance on the NCLEX-RN exam, tuition cost, average program length, coverage area, further educational pathways and partnerships, and number of cohorts annually. The program was lauded for being "designed to work around the employed LPN, with lectures and coursework delivered in a fully online format with supervised clinical rotations arranged in the student's local area." Approximately 40 percent of ACM's online students reside in the area. A new online program would again be in direct competition to this successful existing program.

CYNTHIA S. BAMBARA, PRESIDENT

301-784-5270 | 301-784-5050 (Fax) | cbambara@allegany.edu

Maryland Board of Nursing (MBON) and the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) recently conducted an accrediting site visit where the team noted perfect alignment between the on-site and the online programs, and found the overall program to be "exemplar." ACM Nursing was awarded another 8 years of full accreditation with NO areas of non-compliance found.

ACM acknowledges the need for nurses locally, statewide, and nationally. We have heard this from our clinical partners too. To this end, ACM has strategically expanded its nursing cohorts to accommodate more students: adding an evening cohort, doubling the acceptance of our online students, hiring 6 new nursing full-time faculty over the last two years, and promoting the Nursing Director to Associate Dean to better coordinate this expansion. Additionally, ACM has submitted and is awaiting notification (June 2022) on the award of three separate Nursing Support Program II (NSP-II) grants:

NSPII Doubling the Nursing Evening Program. Double the capacity of the evening nursing program in Allegany County to create an opportunity for an additional 30 RN qualified nurses every year (90 new graduates after year four). \$749,215.

NSPII Maryland LPN to RN Online Nursing Cohort. Institute a Maryland Resident LPN to RN Cohort annually for an additional 60 RN qualified nurses every year in years 2-4 (180 new graduates after year four). \$676,684.

NSPII Hybrid Weekend Nursing Program Feasibility Planning Grant. Review the feasibility of adding a hybrid weekend program to enhance the availability and accessibility of nursing education in Maryland. \$24,874.

Adding a new program at this time would negatively impact the \$1,450,773 in grants in the works and ACM's ability to adequately fulfill the goals and objectives. Again, ACM is doing everything in its power to increase the access and success of Nursing students in the area.

During COVID, clinical placement of students—an essential part of the curriculum—became problematic. It can be reasonably predicted that adding another program and their students will create further complications in the future. The concern is that this crucial learning opportunity will be prevented for our students due to overwhelming demand for placements: too few to accommodate the student need. Furthermore, with two competing programs in such vicinity, saturation in the local job market will be reached in the foreseeable future. Unnecessary competition results in too few clinical placements and ultimately too few local jobs.

ACM has a long history of collaboration and partnership with Frostburg State University. We share in each other's successes. We currently have numerous initiatives in development together. This history of collaboration extends to the Nursing programs—such as 2016-2020 grant "Implementation to the Innovative Approach to a Collaborative BSN Model" in which \$716,056.53 was awarded to FSU to develop a joint effort with ACM "to increase bedside baccalaureate nurses while simultaneously eliminating program duplication" (see attached). This history of collaboration makes it all the more surprising that ACM was not notified or consulted about this application prior to reading the proposal on the MHEC website.

Additionally, we have an executed Memorandum of Understanding as part of the BSN Collaborative mentioned above. This document, signed May 23, 2016 by both Dr. Nowaczyk and Dr. Bambara (see attached) states: "Students eligible for this option would reside in counties outside of those that normally attend the ACM Nursing Program." This agreement, that is still in place and has *never been* terminated by either party, acknowledges and establishes the noncompete relationship concerning the two Nursing programs. Multiple reassurances from senior leadership that Frostburg State University would not establish a program that would compete with ACM have been offered over the years.

In summation, Allegany College of Maryland strongly objects to Frostburg State University's proposal for a new Nursing program that creates "unreasonable program duplication which would cause harm to another institution." A quality nursing program already exists in western Maryland. One that serves the region and beyond. One that has made strategic institutional investments to expand to better meet the nursing need. A program that would suffer for competing resources and students in an area of already declining demographics.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

I look forward to future discussions concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cynthia Bambara

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President

Attachments

Dr. Kurt Hoffman Senior Vice President

Instructional and Student Affairs



Memo

To: Dr. Heather Gable,

Chair, Associate Professor, Department of Nursing

Frostburg State University

From: Debbie Costello, MSN,

Director of Nursing Education Allegany College of Maryland

Date: May 3, 2016

Re: MOU- BSN Collaborative

Please find enclosed a MOU entitled "BSN Collaborative- FSU Student – ACM and FSU- Associate Degree in Nursing (AS) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Option: Implementation of the Innovative Approach to a Collaborative BSN Model between ACM and FSU. Also enclosed for review is a "Financial Aid Form" developed to help facilitate and track the financial aid process.

Please let me know if you have any questions or items for discussion. Otherwise, please sign where indicated, and then forward the MOU on for the additional signatures needed for approval.

Thank you,

Debbie Costello

Memorandum of Understanding BSN Collaborative- FSU Student- ACM and FSU

Associate Degree in Nursing (AS) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Option: Implementation of the Innovative Approach to a Collaborative BSN Model between Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) and Frostburg State University (FSU)

I. Summary

Allegany College of Maryland and Frostburg State University agree to offer a collaborative option in which students will pursue an Associate of Science (AS) degree in Nursing at ACM while working to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing (BSN) at Frostburg State University.

Students eligible for this option would reside in counties outside of those that normally attend the ACM Nursing Program. Students residing in Allegany and Garrett counties in Maryland, Mineral, Hampshire and Hardy counties in West Virginia and Somerset, Cambria, Bedford, Blair and Fayette counties in Pennsylvania would not be considered for admission under this MOU to the ACM Nursing Program.

II. Overview

The goal of the collaborative option is to increase the number of Baccalaureate prepared nurses in the community. This relationship will provide for an ease of transition and foster a relationship that encourages degree completion. This collaborative model/option would allow students to attend FSU for their first year of college to complete pre-requisite courses. For the next two years students could then attend ACM's part-time nursing program while taking one course at FSU. Students would finish ACM's nursing program within these two years and be eligible for nursing licensure. For the students final year they would finish their BSN at FSU by completing the remaining RN-BSN courses.

III. Overall Requirements

- a. Students must meet application requirements for ACM as a degree seeking student during the time they are enrolled in the AS degree portion of the curriculum.
- b. Students must meet the application requirements for Frostburg State
 University as a degree-seeking student during the entire time they are enrolled
 in the Collaborative BSN option.
- c. Students must be dually enrolled at ACM and FSU for the time period during which they are earning their AS degree in Nursing.
- d. Students must meet programmatic screening requirements established by mutual consent of the two institutions for full acceptance into the Collaborative BSN option.
- e. Students must meet programmatic progression policy requirements to meet academic rigor throughout matriculation. Procedures regarding disciplinary action and, as warranted, option dismissal, will be established by FSU and ACM to insure compliance.

- f. The AS degree will be awarded by ACM upon successful completion of the nursing AS degree option requirements.
- g. Students must pass the NCLEX-RN® examination on the first attempt, at the completion of their AS degree, in order to continue to the next level.
- h. The BSN degree will be awarded by FSU upon successful completion of the option requirements.
- i. A Collaborative BSN Committee composed of ACM and FSU representatives, will be designated to serve as the leadership for the option.

IV. Curriculum

- a. FSU and ACM will each identify one person from its respective institution who will be the primary contact person for the dual enrollment option and who will provide overarching coordination between the institutions.
- b. The Collaborative BSN contact person will propose curricular and/or programmatic changes, subject to approval by the respective institution. Any such changes that affect AS degree requirements will be submitted to the respective ACM curriculum approval body, which has responsibility for final approval.
- c. Similarly, any such programmatic and/or curricular changes that affect the BSN degree requirements will be submitted to a FSU curriculum approval body, which has responsibility for final approval.
- d. The ACM Nursing Program Administrator, in consultation with the Collaborative BSN contact persons, will be responsible for assuring that the option's curriculum content meets accreditation requirements for the AS degree. This includes notification to the Maryland Board of Nursing and/or any accrediting agencies identified by ACM and Department of Nursing.
- e. The FSU Department of Nursing Chair, in consultation with the Collaborative BSN contact persons, will be responsible for assuring that the option's curriculum content meets accreditation requirements for the BSN degree. This includes notification to the Maryland Board of Nursing and any accrediting agencies identified by FSU and Department of Nursing.
- f. ACM and FSU shall each retain ownership of their respective courses, including materials and content, for which they have responsibility under this MOU.

Courses will be transferred from ACM to FSU according to the table below

ACM Courses		FSU Course Equivalence	
N120	9 credits	FSU 195	7 credits
N150	9 credits	FSU 195	7 credits
N205	6 credits	FSU 295	5 credits
N206	3 credits	FSU 295	3 credits
N215	9 credits	FSU 295	7 credits
N204	1 credit	FSU 295	1 credit
	37 credits		30 credits

V. Admissions

- a. Students will complete an application for admission into FSU.
- b. During the first year as a student at FSU, students will complete general education course work to meet both ACM and FSU requirements.
- c. During the first year at FSU, students will complete an application to the FSU Nursing Department for the AS degree nursing option.
- d. A list of students, who are to be considered for the FSU Collaborative will be forwarded from the FSU Pre-Nursing Coordinator to the ACM Assistant to the Director of Nursing by September 30th preceding the Spring semester that the FSU student is requesting admission to ACM Nursing.
- e. The semester before seeking admission to the ACM Nursing Program, the student will complete the following applications: an application to the Allegany College of Maryland and another application to the ACM Nursing Program. Both of these applications need completed prior to the established deadline dates. All college transcripts must be received by September 30th proceeding the Spring semester that the FSU student is requesting admission to ACM Nursing.
- f. For admission into the ACM Nursing Program, students will be ranked and admitted based on a standardized exam score (weighted 1/3) and a point system awarding points for each required course completed and grade earned (weighted 2/3). Admission into the nursing program is competitive and not all applicants can be selected.
- g. A cohort of up to 10 students will be selected for the spring semester annually for this BSN Collaborative. An increase in the number of students and semesters admitted may be adjusted, if both parties are in agreement.
- h. The Collaborative BSN Committee will establish the screening criteria and select the students for the option.
- Information on students selected for admission by the Collaborative BSN Committee will be forwarded to the FSU department of nursing for final approval for those applicants who meet FSU requirements.
- j. A list of FSU students accepted into the AS degree nursing program at ACM will be sent by the ACM Assistant to the Director of Nursing to the FSU Pre-Nursing Coordinator, the Director of FSU Financial Aid and the ACM Director of Accounting.
- k. Once accepted into the AS degree nursing option at ACM, students will complete an "Authorization to Attend another University" form each semester to identify which nursing courses will be transferred into FSU. Students will then need to submit a transcript showing final grades for authorized courses to complete the transfer process. A copy will also need to be submitted to FSU Registrar's Office.

VI. Administration

a. The Collaborative BSN Committee will oversee administrative issues related to admission processes, registration, billing, financial aid, student codes of conduct, academic standards, departmental standards, and other related student services for the Collaborative BSN option.

b. Appointments to the Collaborative BSN Committee will be made by the ACM Nursing Program Administrator and the FSU Department of Nursing Chair.

c. The Committee will be co-chaired by a representative from each institution, and will meet no less than once every year.

VII. Student Services

a. Advising

 Academic advising for the Collaborative BSN degree option requirements, including General Education and prerequisite requirements for entry into the AS Degree portion of the Collaborative BSN option will be the responsibility of both institutions.

ii. Advising may be provided by FSU or ACM faculty personnel before the student is admitted to ACM. Once admitted, students will be assigned an ACM advisor for the duration of the AS degree portion of the Collaborative BSN option, and a FSU advisor for the entire duration of the Collaborative BSN option. ACM and FSU advisors will regularly confer about advisees.

iii. Option information will be provided to each institution by the other institution for pre-advising purposes, so that each institution can knowledgeably respond to student questions about the Collaborative BSN option.

iv. The Collaborative BSN Committee will establish advisement and mentoring protocols, to be reviewed annually, that address AS and BSN degree requirements for use by advisors in each institution. The protocols will address the kinds of support needed for programmatic success by students enrolled in an intensive academic option.

b. Campus Access

 Web-based technology will be utilized for providing assistance with administrative procedures, including admissions, financial aid, registration and billing, grade collection and reporting, etc. Complete option information will be hosted on both ACM's and FSU's nursing websites.

ii. Once admitted to the Collaborative BSN option, students will have access to all student services at ACM, including but not limited to the library, recreation facilities, athletic events, etc. until the completion of the AS degree requirements. Students will have access to all online student services at FSU during the entire enrollment in the Collaborative BSN option. Each party represents and warrants that it is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate with regard to race, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, lawfully prohibited reasons. Neither party shall discriminate with respect to acceptance of qualified applicants into the option.

c. Student Records

- i. Student records for the AS Degree will be maintained by ACM.
- ii. Student records for the BSN Degree will be maintained by FSU.
- All ACM credits associated with the option will be posted on the students' records at FSU.
- iv. Any FSU credits which will be transferred to ACM in partial completion of AS Degree requirements will be posted on the students' records at ACM.

d. Financial Aid

- i. FSU will serve as the home institution for awarding and dispersing of financial aid during student matriculation while in the Collaborative BSN option. As part of the approved Consortium Agreement, FSU is responsible for paying the entire amount of Federal Financial Aid for which each student is eligible based on the combined credits at FSU and ACM. Students will be responsible for applying their financial aid refunds from FSU toward their ACM expenses.
- ii. ACM will join in a formal consortium agreement with FSU for administration of financial aid for the students in the option.
- through the Nursing Department. The Form indicates the financial aid procedure. Upon completion of the form, a copy will be e-mailed to the Director of Accounting at ACM, the Director of Financial Aid at ACM and the Director of Financial Aid at FSU, one week prior to the start of the ACM nursing semester.

e. Registration

- All information related to registration, including course offerings and the schedule of courses required for the Collaborative BSN option will be available through ACM Nursing website and FSU Nursing website, developed jointly through the Collaborative BSN coordinating committee or designee.
- ii. Students will register for their ACM nursing courses through ACM, and for their FSU courses through FSU.

VIII. Distribution of Tuition and Fees

a. Revenue

- i. Students will be billed separately by each institution and will pay for tuition and fees separately to each institution.
- Students will be billed for ACM courses and fees at ACM rates and FSU courses and fees at FSU rates.
- iii. Students pursuing coursework provided by ACM will adhere to the protocols and policies related to course registration, drop/add, and course withdrawal and issue of refunds as established by ACM. Students pursuing coursework provided by FSU will adhere to the protocols and policies related to course registration, drop/add, and course withdrawal and issue refunds as established by FSU.
- iii. FSU will be responsible for issuing refunds to students for FSU courses.(See VII d.1.Financial Aid)
- v. ACM will be responsible for issuing refunds to students for ACM courses.
- vi. It is the student's responsibility to assure that tuition bills are paid at each institution.

b. Expenses

- i. FSU's operating expenses (e.g., phone, copying, library and technology, office supplies, and travel) will be paid by FSU,
- ii. ACM's operating expenses (e.g., phone, copying, library and technology, office supplies, and travel) will be paid by ACM.
- iii. FSU and ACM will establish a mechanism for each institution contributing funds jointly to cover (a) marketing and promotional costs, e.g. open houses, printing, blast emails, promotional supplies, and (b) administrative expenses e.g., joint meetings, travel costs related to the advisory board

IX. Faculty

- The ACM Nursing Program Administrator will determine all teaching assignments for the AS degree courses offered at ACM.
- b. The FSU Department of Nursing Chair will determine all teaching assignments for the Collaborative BSN courses offered through FSU.
- c. The appointment of FSU's Collaborative BSN contact person will be the sole responsibility of FSU, and the appointment of ACM's Collaborative BSN contact person will be the sole responsibility of ACM.
- d. FSU will provide to the ACM Nursing Program, the clinical/campus/simulation lab faculty member needed for each cohort of FSU students to progress to completion of the ACM Nursing Program.
- e. FSU faculty who teach ACM courses on an adjunct basis will be paid at the ACM rate, and will sign an adjunct faculty contract.

 Each Party shall be separately responsible for its faculty who teach its own courses in the option.

X. Review/Modification of this Memorandum of Understanding

- This Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed annually by the Collaborative BSN Committee.
- b. This MOU may be modified only by written agreement signed by the authorized representatives of both parties.

XI. Option Changes

- a. Substantial changes to the option of study, curtailment or discontinuance of this option will be submitted to the Maryland Higher Education Commission through a transmittal letter signed by the Presidents and Provosts/Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs from both institutions.
- This MOU shall be governed by and interpreted under the laws of the State of Maryland.

This agreement becomes effective upon signature by all parties and shall continue in effect unless terminated by either party. Either party may terminate this MOU upon written notice to non-terminating party no later than 60 days prior to the beginning of the non-terminating party's subsequent semester. In the event of termination, each party agrees that students enrolled in the option at the time of the written notice of termination is given may continue to participate in the option until such student has the opportunity to complete the required courses and earn a BSN degree. However, in no event shall this obligation survive for more than two years after the effective termination date of this MOU.

This MOU constitutes the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the degree option described in the "Summary and Overview" sections and supersedes all previous agreements between the parties related to the option, whether written or oral.

We, the undersigned, approve this agreement on be	half of our respective institutions.	
Entered into this 35d of of	May 2016	
(date)	(month)	
Allegany College of MD	Frostburg State University	
Cynthia Bambara, President	Dr. Ronald Nowaczyk President	
Allegany College of MD	Frostburg State University	
Dr. Kurt Hoffman Interim Sr Vice President of Instructional Affairs Allegany College of MD	Ahmad Toontoochi Interim Provost Frostburg State University	
David Dewitt, MS, CPA Vice President of Finance and Human Resources Allegany College of MD	Joseph Hoffman, Dean. Dean College Sciences Frostburg State University	
Debbie Costello, MSN, RN Director of Nursing Education Allegany College of MD	Heather Gable, DNP, RN Chair Department of Nursing Frostburg State University	

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITYMEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

and

ALLEGANY COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

regarding the

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE in Nursing

Frostburg State University and Allegany College of Maryland agree to offer a Bachelor of Science in nursing degree as an articulated program for students who are enrolled in the Associate Degree in Nursing program or have completed an Associate degree in Nursing and are pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Under these terms, students will be admitted to the RN-BSN program under the same standards as are all other students with a degree from any Maryland Community College. Frostburg State University will accept no more than 70 credits for the Associate degree earned.

This agreement applies to three different types of students that are eligible for enrollment in Frostburg State University's RN-BSN program and Allegany College of Maryland's Associate Degree in Nursing program.

- 1. Freshman students entering Allegany College of Maryland are eligible for dual enrollment while taking prerequisite courses to prepare for entrance into the Associate Degree in Nursing program.
- Students admitted to Allegany College of Maryland's Associate Degree in Nursing program and in their second semester that are in good standing according to program guidelines.
- 3. Students that have completed the Associate Degree in Nursing program at Allegany College of Maryland, have an unencumbered RN license in the United States (or are qualified to complete their state RN licensure exam), and have completed the majority of prerequisite course work and general education requirements.

Note: Current Allegany College of Maryland Associate Degree in Nursing students that decide to pursue Frostburg State University's RN-BSN Program may do so at any time. The student can then initiate the enrollment process and will be granted early admission to FSU's RN-BSN program as long as the student meets the admission requirements of the RN-BSN program and are in good standing in their second semester of nursing at Allegany College of Maryland.

Advising sessions (group and individual) will be held every semester. All information related to registration, including course offerings and schedules of classes, will be made available at the community college site or via the Web for students enrolled at Frostburg State University. This will be by phone, email, or synchronous class as per the student's choice.

Any synchronous classes will be scheduled to accommodate the working adult while in an Associate Degree in Nursing Program. The student will receive dual advising from Allegany College of Maryland and Frostburg State University faculty to guide the student in completing appropriate prerequisites and selecting their RN-BSN core courses.

Student records will be maintained at Allegany College of Maryland and will be made accessible to faculty and staff at Frostburg State University with written student permission on as as-needed basis.

Tuition and fees assessed will be that of Frostburg State University for all RN-BSN program core courses.

Students are eligible to apply for departmental scholarships and institutional scholarships, as they will be students at both schools in the event the student decides to attend Frostburg State University RN-BSN classes while pursuing their Associate Degree in Nursing at Allegany College of Maryland.

Students can take any nursing course while pursuing their Associate Degree in Nursing provided they have completed all appropriate prerequisites as outlined in the Frostburg State University undergraduate catalog. (A chemistry course equivalent to Chemistry 201 at Frostburg State University must be completed prior to admission or during the first semester of nursing classes.)

Students that request orientation to the online learning environment may ask for a face-to-face orientation, an independent tutorial via the Web, or a synchronous class via synchronous classroom at any time during enrollment in the RN-BSN program. In addition, students may request a Q&A session regarding any course and/or program issues at any time during enrollment using the above-mentioned formats.

Attached is a description of the current programmatic and degree requirements. (Note: Students must maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average in order to transfer.)

Overview and Summary

Students interested in participating in the program must complete the following steps:

- 1. Complete the Associate Degree in Nursing at Allegany College of Maryland.
- Apply for admission to Frostburg State University, indicating RN-BSN Program as the 2. intended major. Applications for admission can be obtained by visiting the website: http://www.frostburg.edu/ungrad/admiss/transfer.htm
- For more information on the FSU RN-BSN Program, visit www.frostburg.edu/nursing 3.
- 4. Once an application has been submitted, follow up by contacting:

Roxanne Weighley, Program Management Specialist **RN-BSN Program** Frostburg State University 101 Braddock Road Frostburg, MD 21532

Phone: 301-687-4141

Email: rmweighley@frostburg.edu

ARTICULATION AGREEMENT

Allegany College of Maryland Associate of Science in Nursing

Frostburg State University Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Entered into this	day of Accident , 2013
(date)	(month)
Rastes	Cynchio Bambara President
Dr. Jonathan Gibralter, President Frostburg State University	Allegany College of Maryland
Dr. Stephen Simpson, Provost Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	Dr. David Hinds Vice President of Instructional Affairs Allegany College of Maryland
Dr. Joseph Hoffman College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Prostburg State University	David Dewit, MS, CPA Vice President of Finance and Human Resources Allegany College of Maryland
Heather Gable, Chair Nursing Department Frostburg State University	Debbie Costello, MSN, RN Nursing Program Director Allegany College of Maryland